

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /059 W

----- 054955

R 132354Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY OTTAWA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9450

C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 1478

POUCHED AS INFO TO ALL CONSULATES IN CANADA

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CA

SUBJ: MEDIA COMMENT ON TRUDEAU AS FALLING LEADER

REF: OTTAWA 1398

1. IN APRIL 12 MONTREAL GAZETTE, RESPECTED POLITICAL COMMENTAROR DOUGLAS FISHER INTERPRETS RECENT GALLUP POLL RESULTS (REFTEL) AS CONFIRMING, "WHAT WE ALL SENSED: A GOVERNMENT ON THE TOBOGGAN WITH ITS LEADER STEADILY LOSING FAVOR TO AN AVAILABLE AND MODERATELY-CREDIBLE ALTERNATIVE. IF ONE READS THE SITUATION, AS I DO, THAT NEVER AGAIN CAN PIERRE TRUDEAU WIN A MAJORITY GOVERNMENT FROM THE CANADIAN ELECTORATE, THEN ONE GETS TO THE BIG QUESTIONS: WHO TELLS THE PRIME MINISTER HE MUST GO OR THAT HE SHOULD GO FOR THE GOOD OF THE LIBERAL PARTY?"

2. FISHER CONCLUDES THAT ANGLO LIBERALS WOULD NOT CONVINCE TRUDEAU OF THE NEED FOR HIS LEAVING AND THAT QUEBEC MEMBERS OF FEDERAL LIBERAL CAUCUS WHO COULD DO THE JOB ARE UNLIKELY TO TRY. LATTER GROUP, ACCORDING TO FISHER, "HAVE A CONCERN WHICH OVERSHADOWS ANY FRETTING ABOUT THE PRIME MINISTER. IT IS THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN PROVINCIAL POLITICS. THEY SEE THE PQ COMING ON STRONGLY AND THE BOURASSA GOVERNMENT, SUPPOSEDLY THEIR ALLY, IN DEEP TROUBLE. BEYOND THEIR ATTITUDE THAT

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BOURASSA IS A HEAVY-HANDED OPPORTUNIST WHO IS BUNGLING

BADLY, IS A CONVICTION THAT THE FEDERALIST OPTIONS RIDE WITH HIM AND HE IS NEITHER TRUE TO THEM NOR ABLE ENOUGH TO SUSTAIN THEM. SO MOST OF THE QUEBEC MPS ARE DESPERATELY ANXIOUS TO GET RID OF BOURASSA, MUCH MORE SO THAN THEY ARE ABOUT GETTING RID OF TRUDEAU." WITH QUEBEC MP PREOCCUPATION WITH BOURASSA, FISHER ASSERTS THAT IT IS UNLIKELY THAT THEY WILL TACKLE TRUDEAU.

3. EQUALLY RESPECT COLUMNIST WILLIAM WILSON IN APRIL 10 OTTAWA JOURNAL TAKES SOMEWHAT MORE RESTRAINED VIEW OF TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT PROSPECTS. WILSON POINTS OUT THAT "...THE LIBERAL REALIST LOOK AT THE STEADY EROSION OF THEIR PARTY'S SUPPORT, WHICH HAS GONE ON MONTH AFTER MONTH, WITH ONLY SLIGHT TEMPORARY FLICKERS IN THE DOWNWARD GRAPH AND RECOGNIZE THAT IT SIGNIFIFES SERIOUS TROUBLE". WHILE THE PROSPECT OF ECONOMIC UP-TURN MIGHT BE VIEWED AS A DEUS EX MACHINA BY SOME, WILSON IS DUBIOUS, FINDING THE ROOT CAUSE FOR LIKELY LIBERAL PARTY DOWNFALL IN TRUDEAU'S PERSONALITY AND THE PUBLIC IMPRESSION OF PPOR LIBERAL GOVERNMENT MANAGEMENT. HE NOTES THAT, "IT IS DOUBTFUL WHETHER ANY POLITICAL LEADER CAN REPEATEDLY LOSE AND THEN REGAIN PERSONAL POPULARITY, ALTHOUGH MR. TRUDEAU SEEMS TO FIND AN ELEMENT OF CHALLENGE IN TRYING. MUCH MORE SERIOUS THAN THAT, HOWEVER, IS THE FACT THAT THE LIBERALS HAVE A LEADER OF LESSENING POPULARITY AT A TIME WHEN THEY ARE COLLECTIVELY CREATING THE IMPRESSION OF BEING PPOR NATIONAL MANAGERS." EVEN WITH THIS GLOOMY PICTURE FOR THE LIBERALS, HOWEVER, WILSON IS UNWILLING TO JOIN FISHER IN A CATEGRICAL STATEMENT THAT TRUDEAU IS FINISHED. HE CONCLUDES HIS ARTICLE BY OBSERVING THAT "...IN PRINCIPLE, THE GOVERNMENT OUGHT TO BE ABLE TO PULL ITSELF TOGETHER AND STOP ITS DOWNWARD SLIDE INTO GROWING PUBLIC UNPOPULARITY. BUT THAT IS ONLY A STATEMENT OF THEORY."

4. COMMENT: BEYOND INTERESTING FISHER THESIS OF NO ONE TO GET THE WORD TO TRUDEAU, HIS ARTICLE IS NOTEWORTHY SINCE IT IS THE FIRST UNEQUIVOCAL COMMENT BY RESPONSIBLE COLUMNIST PROJECTING FROM GALLUP POLL RESULTS THAT TRUDEAU IS - OR SHOULD BE FINISHED AS LEADER. WE EXPECT THAT SUCH COMMENT IS FIRST OF MANY MORE FROM MEDIA COMMENTATORS, CONFIDENTIAL

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FEW OF WHOM ARE SYMPATHETIC TO TRUDEAU. EMBASSY TAKES LESS EXTREME VIEW THAN FISHER AND CLOSER TO THE WILSON THESIS. WE HAVE BEEN REPORTING THE ILLS OF TRUDEAU AND HIS GOVERNMENT FOR MONTHS. GALLUP POLL RESULTS CONFIRM THAT THE MESSAGE IS GETTING TO THE ELECTORATE. BUT THE NEXT FEDERAL ELECTIONS ARE TWO YEARS AWAY AND TRUDEAU IS NOTHING IF NOT RESOURCEFUL. WOUNDED, YES. BUT DEAD AND READY FOR BURIAL, NO WAY.

ENDERS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: PRESS COMMENTS, POLICIES, PUBLIC OPINION POLLS, POLITICAL PARTIES
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 13 APR 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ellisoob
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976OTTAWA01478
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760140-0817
From: OTTAWA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760467/aaaacfdh.tel
Line Count: 116
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 OTTAWA 1398
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ellisoob
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 12 APR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <12 APR 2004 by BoyleJA>; APPROVED <18 AUG 2004 by ellisoob>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEDIA COMMENT ON TRUDEAU AS FALLING LEADER
TAGS: PINT, CA, (TRUDEAU, PIERRE-ELLIOTT)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006